

MEDIA KIT



SHONDA BUCHANAN

WRITER • EDUCATOR • SPEAKER • CONSULTANT • TRAVELER

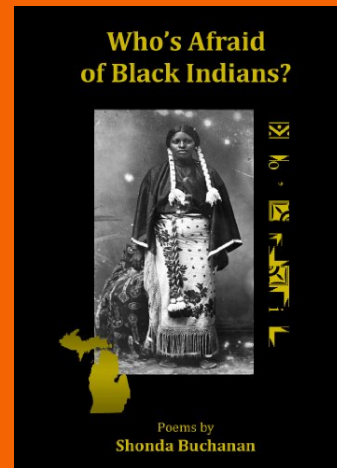
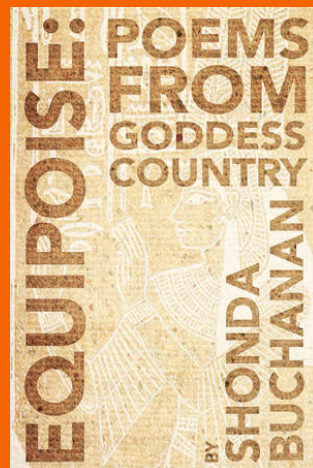
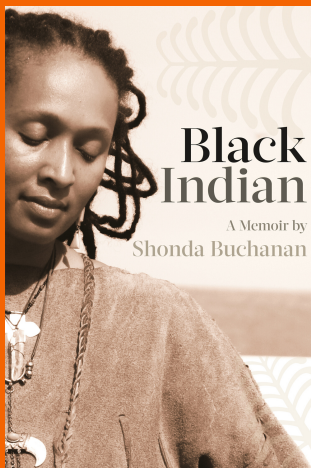


TABLE OF CONTENTS


Short Bio	1
Long Bio	2
Black Indian	5
Discussion Questions	6
A Q&A About <i>Black Indian</i>	7
Other Books	10
Contact Information	11

SHORT BIO



Author of five books, Shonda Buchanan was born in Kalamazoo, Michigan, a daughter of Mixed Bloods, tri-racial and tri-ethnic African American, American Indian and European-descendant families who migrated from North Carolina and Virginia in the mid-1700 to 1800s to Southwestern Michigan. ***Black Indian***, her memoir, begins the saga of these migration stories of Free People of Color communities exploring identity, ethnicity, landscape and loss. Her collection of poetry, ***Who's Afraid of Black Indians?***, was nominated for the Black Caucus of the American Library Association and the Library of Virginia Book Awards. An award-winning poet and educator, Shonda is a Sundance Writing Arts Fellow, a California Community Foundation Fellow, a PEN Emerging Voices Fellow and Literary Editor of Harriet Tubman Press. In addition to her work as literary activist, a teaching artist and a mentor for young writers, she's taught at Hampton University, William & Mary College (Writer-in-Residence), California State University, Northridge and Mt. San Antonio College. An active board member of Beyond Baroque Literary Arts Center, Columnist for the LA Weekly, Shonda received an MFA at Antioch University and currently teaches at her alma mater, Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles.

LONG BIO



Author of five books, Shonda Buchanan was born in Kalamazoo, Michigan, a daughter of Mixed Bloods, tri-racial and tri-ethnic African American, American Indian and European-descendant families who migrated from North Carolina and Virginia in the mid-1700 to 1800s to Southwestern Michigan. ***Black Indian***, her memoir, begins the saga of these migration stories of Free People of Color communities exploring identity, ethnicity, landscape and loss. Her collection of poetry, ***Who's Afraid of Black Indians?***, was nominated for the Black Caucus of the American Library Association and the Library of Virginia Book Awards. Her third collection of poetry, ***Equipoise: Poems from Goddess Country***, as published by San Francisco Bay Press. An award-winning poet and educator, Shonda is a Sundance Writing Arts Fellow, a California Community Foundation Fellow, a PEN Emerging Voices Fellow and Literary Editor of Harriet Tubman Press.

Shonda's poetry and essays have been featured in numerous anthologies such as *The Seventh Wave*, *Urban Voices: 51 Poems from 51 American Poets*, *Silver Birch Press*, *Art Meets Literature: An Undying Love Affair*, *A Def Poetry Jam*, *Step into a World: A Global Anthology of the New Black Literature*, *Geography of Rage: Remember the Los Angeles Riots of 1992*, and *Catch the Fire!!! A Cross-Generational Anthology of Contemporary African-American Poetry*, *Rivendale*, *WhatFreshWitchIsThis?*, and *LongStoryShort*.

Having received several Virginia Foundation for the Arts and Arts Midwest/ National Endowment for the Arts grants, Shonda is an Education Specialist for the U.S. Department of State and has conducted dynamic international presentations for schools and organizations such as the EduCulture Bookstore (Amsterdam), MareCollege (Leiden, Holland), the U.S Embassy (Malaysia), the International Poetry Festival in Havana, Cuba and the Athens Institute for Education & Research in Athens, Greece.

Former Writer-in-Residence at William & Mary College and former Assistant Professor and Interim Chair of the Department of English & Foreign Languages at Hampton University, she has taught poetry, fiction, narrative nonfiction, composition, magazine writing and editing, and research for the last 20 years. Her expertise includes Contemporary American, African American, and American Indian Literature, Comparative Literature, as well as Women's Literature.

Continued on the next page.

A former magazine editor and journalist, she is a Columnist for the *LA Weekly*, having freelanced there since 1991, writing about the LA arts community, entertainment and culture. Shonda has also freelanced for the *Los Angeles Times*, *AWP's The Writer's Chronicle*, *The Daily Press*, the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, *Michigan History Magazine* and *Indian Country Today*.

A culture and literary arts ambassador, Shonda has interviewed hundreds of congressional leaders, celebrities, artists, financiers, business owners, healers and corporate heads. She has conducted hundreds of workshops, seminars and keynote addresses exploring race, ethnicity, class, community and culture for organizations such as the U.S. Government Accountability Organization, the U.S. Embassy Kuala Lumpur, the Eiteljorg Museum, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Association of Writers & Writing Programs, the Hampton Roads Writers Conference, the Detroit Public Library, the Kalamazoo Public Library, the Poetry Society of Virginia, the Virginia Festival of the Book, the University of Detroit, Mercy, Grays Harbor College, The Broad Museum, Kalamazoo Valley Community College and many more.

Her presentations such as, "Literature of the Los Angeles Riots" "Black Indian Intersections," "Missing and Murdered Black and Indigenous Women," "Crossing into the Poetics of Culture and Heritage: How to Write a Cultural Poem," "Writing Octavia Butler Science Fiction," "Top Ten Women in Sci-Fi," "Black Women Writers," "Black Indians in North Carolina and Virginia," "Lakota Star Quilts," and discussions around her memoir, *Black Indian*, demonstrate her passion for exploring writing, literacy, heritage, community, landscape, environment, ancestry and the role of the humanities in our lives.

A past judge for the Virginia Arts Commission, the Library of Virginia Literary Awards, the North Carolina Arts Council Writers' Fellowship, Shonda is the consummate community ambassador, journalist and engaged professor who explores issues of selfhood, human agency, race, ethnicity, class, and gender, as well as culture, women's issues, bi-raciality, spirituality, identity, African American, American Indian and tri-racial narratives. Her essay, "Ethnicity," was published in the *Encyclopedia of Race and Racism*.

Interviewed by CNN and NPR commentator Angela Rye for the Harriet Tubman Press launch, and commissioned (African American Alumni Association, Loyola Marymount University) to write two poems, one for boxing legend Sugar Ray Leonard and another for LA community activist, Forescee Hogan-Rowles, Shonda has commentated for Marketplace Radio and was featured on Montana Public Radio and National Public Radio.

Continued on the next page.

Shonda has lectured, paneled and taught workshops at public libraries, bookstores, high schools and middle schools, conferences and numerous colleges and universities including University of Tennessee at Martin, Christopher Newport University, Norfolk State University, University of Richmond, Old Dominion University, and at the Washingtoniana and Black Studies Divisions MLK Memorial Library. A former faculty advisor and board member for her former department's study abroad in Bath, England program, Shonda was a guest lecturer in Bath teaching "The Haunts and Hovels of Harlem Renaissance Writers."

Shonda completed a third collection of poetry about the iconic concert pianist and singer, Nina Simone, and is working on a book of poetry about Phillis Wheatley and Jupiter Hammon, two screenplays, a novel exploring Black and American Indian intersections, and a collection of essays about the migration of Free People of Color from the Southeast to the Midwest.

In addition to her work as a literary activist, a teaching artist and a mentor for young writers, she's taught at California State University, Northridge, Mt. San Antonio College, Thomas Nelson Community College and Whittier College.

An active board member of Beyond Baroque Literary Arts Center, and a Women's Traditional dancer and singer, Shonda received an MFA at Antioch University and currently teaches at her alma mater, Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles.



BLACK INDIAN

A Memoir by **Shonda Buchanan**

PUBLISHER:

Wayne State University Press

PUBLICATION DATE:

August 26, 2019

ISBN-13:

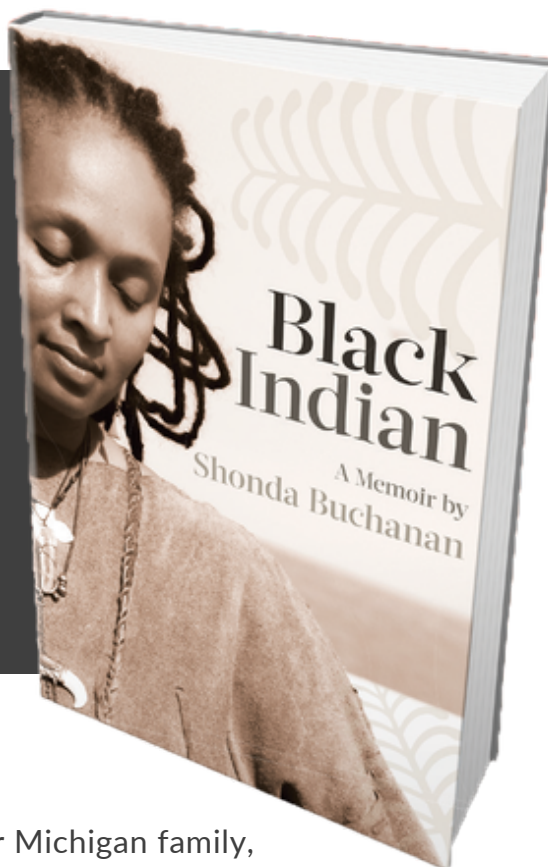
978-0814345801

FORMAT:

Paperback (352 pages), Ebook

PRICE:

\$19.99 (Paperback), \$9.99 (Ebook)



Praise for *Black Indian*

“With interwoven stories about the women in her Michigan family, Buchanan, the literary editor of Harriet Tubman Press, furthers the important work she has done in her poetry, uncovering the hidden histories of families struggling to define their mixed black and Native American bloodlines to their own satisfaction.” —*Kirkus Reviews*

“*Black Indian* is an emotionally draining memoir that is also resonant in its discussions of poverty's destructive forces.” —*Foreword Reviews*

Black Indian, searing and raw, is Amy Tan’s *The Joy Luck Club* and Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple* meets Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Ceremony*—only, this isn’t fiction. Beautifully rendered and rippling with family dysfunction, secrets, deaths, drunks, and old resentments, Shonda Buchanan’s memoir is an inspiring story that explores her family’s legacy of being African Americans with American Indian roots and how they dealt with not just society’s ostracization but the consequences of this dual inheritance.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

FOR CLASSROOMS AND BOOK CLUBS

1. In the first chapter, why do you think the author opens with a burial scene? What do you think of the imagery? How does the imagery set the tone of the book?
2. Who are the main characters in Chapter 1 and how do they introduce and shape the book's plot?
3. What do you think about the narrator's relationship with her sister? Do any of the narrator's family members sound like your family members? If so, how?
4. In Chapter 4, how do you feel when the author introduces the term "Mulatto," "Mixed bloods"? Is the idea of colorism and how race was constructed new to you? Did you learn about this in school? If yes, when?
5. In Chapter 8, and in other instances throughout the book, does it surprise you when the author talks about race and ethnicity? What surprises you in the book?
6. Why does the author introduce the crush she had on a boy in middle school, and how does this scene represent more than a crush?
7. What is the role of dreams in the book? Why are dreams important to the narrator and to the plot? Do these otherworldly elements, also called magic realism or Afro-futurism, sound familiar? Do you or your family have stories of encounters with ghosts or the dreams that come true?
8. How does the author reveal to readers her connection to both the African American and American Indian culture? Is this important for the reader? Why does the author call herself Black Indian? Is the term controversial?
9. In Chapter 12, why does the narrator return to the past and her childhood? How does the narrator represent childhood?
10. What kind of research did the author include in the book to show how she traced her family ancestry? Do you think it was hard or rewarding? Have you or a family member tested your/their DNA? Why or why not?
11. How does the abuse and addiction in the book make you feel? Do you have a family member or a friend who suffers from any kind of substance that you wish you could help?
12. How does the narrator turn the negative experiences of her childhood into lessons? How does she grow, grow up, change and raise her daughter because of how she herself grew up?
13. What do you think of the poetic language in the book? Does it help you as a reader see the story or does it distract you?
14. Why did the author write this book, *Black Indian*? What's the main focus or the main themes? Should this story or excerpts be included in history books?
15. What did you take away from *Black Indian*?

A Q&A ABOUT BLACK INDIAN

Q: Why did you write your book?

A: I wrote this book because this story is a universal one that hasn't been told in a memoir before. It's the real story of America. One that's been hidden. It's also the story of my women, and how the drug epidemic of the 80s impacted my family in the worst way, and our will to survive. It's my *Joy Luck Club* meets *The Color Purple* meets *The Help* and *Ceremony*. We're not tragic mulattos. We're Mixed Blood in America.

Q: What parts of history are you examining in *Black Indian*?

A: In order to understand the intersections of African Americans and American Indians in this country we have to look at the trifecta for people of color and how these overlapped, 1) we have to look at slavery, 2) we have to look at the American Indian experience, i.e., the Trail of Tears (removal or the multiple removals) and the Five Civilized Tribes, 3) and we have to look at the formation of race as it evolved and manifested in the U.S. Census.

In each instance, with the now debunked "discovery" myth of Columbus, with the landing of the first Africans, Angolans, in 1619 in Jamestown, with Andrew Jackson's Manifest Destiny, at every juncture, the Powhatan Confederacy interact with Africans; some Africans who escaped slavery married into American Indian tribes and had babies; the Five Civilized tribes who assimilated to Western ways to save their culture owned slaves. There are so many moments when this happened. That's my family.

My book is the first time you see the residuals of these particular crossroads. The narratives of how the loss of language, land, traditions and culture, and a way of life manifested due to that loss, and then had to be recreated. And this is the story of Black America. Really it's not just my story it is my mom's story but it's not just her story it's very much my sister's story but it's not just her story. This is the story of displacement and erasure and reclassification. This is the story of racial divide. It's the story of subjugation and Jim Crow, particularly of women of color who worked in the homes of white people under duress and for very little money. My grandmother and great grandmother were those women in *The Help*.

Q: What do you mean?

A: We're descendants of migrants. My people were Free People of Color settlers, farmers and landowners. My grandmother and her mother were domestic workers. Their lives as young women were hard. Their worth was based solely on procreation. My eldest known female ancestor, Anny Sophia Milum, b. in 1824, had 15 children. She was pregnant for nearly 15 years of her life. Can you imagine that? Back then, this was a woman's worth.

Continued on the next page.

Q: What's a Black Indian? Where do they hang out?

A: I'm right here. When I was growing up my mother never used the term Black Indian. She always said "You've got some Indian in you, some French and German, and a little bit of Black. So I lived my life according to what she said, but I also lived in the role society prescribed to me by my race and gender: a Black Woman in America. And I still do. I'm both. Because I never saw any white relatives that I was blood-related to at family reunions, and none of my "light-skinned" aunts claimed white to my knowledge, I was mostly Black and American Indian. Until I did my DNA I had constructed my identity through an oral history of my ethnicity, then when I traced my ancestors to specific tribes, I had historical documentation on my matrilineal side that said, "Indian," but then I did my DNA and boy, what a surprise.

Q: How many Black Indians are there in America?

A: By now, anyone who has taken a DNA test knows that the concept "race" is a social construct in America. For African Americans and American Indians at the formation of the Americas in the 1500s, race was used to classify and divide peoples who were traditionally subjugated. But the idea of a race (which replaced ethnicity) was also used, very subtly, legally and imaginatively, to delegate and prescribe one's status. That's the fulcrum moment. That's also the point of erasure of specific tribes and tribal affiliations. With that, no one really knows how many Black Indians there are for a multitude of reasons. However, the U.S. Census listed that 7.2 percent of Americans, roughly 50,000, labeled themselves Black Indian.

Q: How does your family deal with the Black Indian, dual race and tri-racial heritage?

A: For me, and in my book, I show a family, past and present, through the story of my mom, my aunts and my sister, in particular, engaged in multiple identity struggles, cycles of abuse and a constant state of recovery based on this historical act of race formation.

My grandfather was the fruit of this self-hatred, this division which put Blacks in perpetually inferior status. For my grandfather who couldn't keep his lies straight once told my aunt he was born in Oklahoma; he told my mother they were Blackfoot. But he didn't know. He was suffering and tried to quiet his demons in a bottle. For him, and so many other Black men, Mixed Blood men and women, it's been such a hard, dangerous yet consistent message that your one drop of white blood did not make you a part of the white race; yet your one drop of American Indian blood did not make you American Indian, but Black blood, now there was the proof. You were inferior. And don't you forget it. You could be both, or all three, except on the U.S. Census. This stems from purists trying to re-whiten the white race. Or keep it from being diluted any further but it was too late. Mixed bloods were passing in droves.

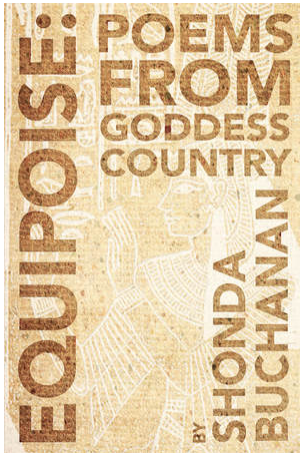
Continued on the next page.

Look at Sally Hemings and Thomas Jefferson's last 4 children. They disappeared into white society. In contrast look at Mildred Loving. She was Black and Rappahannock but she was relegated to, and subsumed by Black in America, without the right to marry the man she loved because he was white. Color prescribes status.

Q: How are Black Indians seen today?

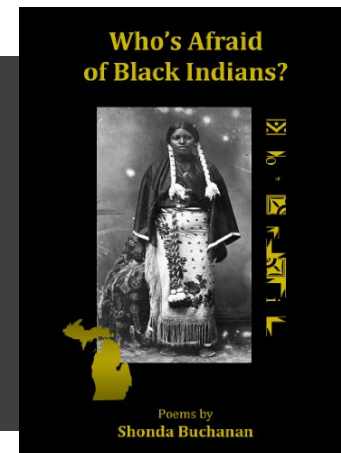
A: Black Indians as a community are mostly embraced by full-blood or federally recognized Indigenous Peoples, First Peoples, American Indians. We dance at pow wows and participate in ceremonies. We practice both our African and American Indian culture. I'm a women's traditional dancer, and there are some places where I've danced, or sang with a drum, where we weren't embraced. I've had an altercation at a pow wow in Virginia. I heard a comment on a PBS special one time looking at the lives of American Indians and one man said, "And what about those Mixed Bloods, eh? Confused isn't it?" As a community, or even a sub-community, Black Indians haunt the shadows. Unless you see us at pow wows, or unless we speak up, it's like we don't exist. We're just Black in mainstream America. Until we sing a song, or tell you where we've done ceremony or who our people are. Then folks sit up and say, "Oh, you're real." Yes, we're Mixed Blood. We're real.

OTHER BOOKS

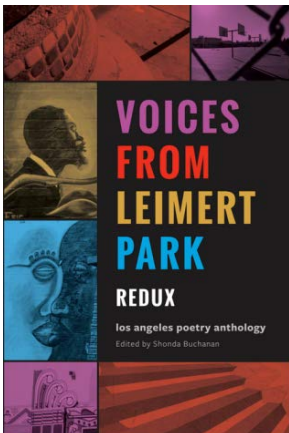


AUTHOR NAME: Shonda Buchanan
BOOK TITLE: Equipoise: Poems from Goddess Country
PUBLISHER: San Francisco Press
PUBLICATION DATE: May 19, 2017
ISBN-13: 978-0996835053
PAGES: 128

AUTHOR NAME: Shonda Buchanan
BOOK TITLE: Who's Afraid of Black Indians?
PUBLISHER: Poetica Publishing
PUBLICATION DATE: 2012
ISBN-13: 978-0983641087
PAGES: 48

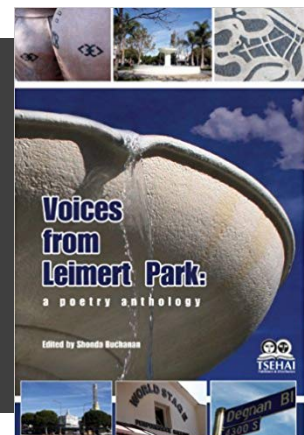


EDITOR: ANTHOLOGIES



AUTHOR NAME: Shonda Buchanan
BOOK TITLE: Voices from Leimert Park REDUX: A Poetry Anthology
PUBLISHER: Tsehai Publishers
PUBLICATION DATE: October 14, 2017
ISBN-13: 978-1599071848
PAGES: 171

AUTHOR NAME: Shonda Buchanan
BOOK TITLE: Voices from Leimert Park: A Poetry Anthology
PUBLISHER: Tsehai Publishers
PUBLICATION DATE: December 15, 2006
ISBN-13: 978-1599070155
PAGES: 212



CONTACT



CONSULTANT/EDUCATOR/AUTHOR/SPEAKER/WORKSHOP LEADER



424-226-6148



info@ShondaBuchanan.com



@ShondaBuchanan



@ShondaBuchanan



/ShondaBuchanan



@ShondaBuchananAuthor